



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

— Making a positive difference through education and service —

September 8, 2004

Ms. Mary Sullivan-Thomas, President
Community Opportunities for People
with Developmental Disabilities
P. O. Box 420
Troy, Missouri 63379

Dr. Ronald E. Kruse, Executive Director
Developmental Services of Franklin County
104 South McKinley, Suite E
Union, Missouri 63084

Dear Ms. Sullivan-Thomas and Dr. Kruse:

This letter is in response to your letter which I received on August 16, 2004, in which you submitted a proposal to become a System Point of Entry (SPOE) for First Steps.

As you know, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) currently has 24 SPOE contracts in place statewide to provide a specific array of services to support the First Steps system. These contracts are bid through the Office of Administration (OA) through a competitive bid process. Three (3) of the SPOE contracts were awarded on July 1, 2004, with various performance outcomes and oversight requirements which we believe will result in greater accountability at the regional level of administration. We will be evaluating over the next 12–18 months, the effectiveness and efficiency of the changes we have made in those SPOE contracts. These contracts affect (1) St. Louis City and St. Charles County, (2) St. Louis County and (3) 15 counties in northwest Missouri and represent almost 50% of the children eligible for First Steps.

The remaining 21 contracts for SPOE operations were awarded by OA in March of 2003. These contracts have renewable clauses until June 30, 2006. At this time, we have no immediate plan to rebid any of these contracts or offer cause for canceling contracts with these bidders which we would have to do to in order to respond to your request to serve as a SPOE. However, the greater issue is the OA's contracting regulations and bidding processes. Since the Missouri Association of County Developmental Disabilities Services (MACDDS) is a private not-for-profit corporation rather than a public governmental agency, the DESE is prohibited from

contracting with MACDDS outside of the OA bidding process. If you are interested in bidding on this type of service through OA in the future, the required vendor registration forms are available on the following website <https://www.moolb.mo.gov>.

I do want to let you know that in review of your proposal, several questions arose. To name a few, your proposal is unclear as the specific counties that would participate, the specific RFP which you proposed to meet (Phase I or Phase II SPOE contract requirements), use of local tax dollars (Senate Bill 40 revenue) as Maintenance of Effort under IDEA, the legal status of the "MACDDS SPOE contract," and the methodology upon which you based your proposed price.

Your membership may be interested in reviewing the Family Survey that was completed this spring by over 1,300 families receiving services through First Steps. Overall, the responses from families are very positive, although we recognize that any state level system such as First Steps is always in a state of continuous improvement and change. The results of the survey are disaggregated by SPOE areas and can be found on our website at <http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divspeced/FirstSteps/pdfs/Ovrallsurvresults.pdf>.

We appreciate your interest in serving infants and toddlers with disabilities and trust that your members will continue to work with our current SPOE network and agencies in the state that are providing services to this very special population to build a statewide system of early intervention services and supports in all counties of Missouri.

Sincerely,

Melodie A. Friedebach, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Special Education

lmb

c: Mr. Dorn Schuffman
Dr. Kent King